

Havre's First Street Project — It's a Wrap!

MDT's largest ever urban reconstruction project wrapped up with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony on September 20. Havre First Street, a \$28.9 million project, spanned 33 blocks along US 2 and changed the face of Havre — both above the pavement and below.

Below ground, extensive utility work included 8,000-plus feet of new sewer main pipe and 8,200-plus feet of new water main pipe and connections. A new storm drain system addresses run-off and flooding issues that plagued Havre throughout the years. The massive system consists of more than four miles of storm drain pipe, 291 drop inlets, 50 new manholes, and three outfalls or discharge points.

Also below ground, two sections of the city's famed Havre Beneath the Streets were upgraded with cast-in-place concrete structures. These were designed to handle the weight of heavy trucks traveling above the tourist attraction while blending in with the rest of the historic Havre Beneath the Streets sections. The improvements will stop deterioration and provide a sound structure long into the future.

Above ground, the 2.4 mile section of US 2 included 101,000 square yards of concrete pavement for the new 5-lane facility. Improvements also included landscaping, colored crosswalks, decorative street lights, retaining walls, concrete benches, and custom-made Welcome to Havre signs. These improvements give the finished project an inviting Montana appeal, as well as providing a long-lasting and safer roadway. While the project spanned two construction seasons, MDT staff, Nelcon Inc., and the Havre community worked together to minimize disruptions. Detailed preplanning, public and community input, and community support helped shape the project and allowed the contractor to complete the job ahead of schedule.

This project will serve as a model for public involvement and outreach for future projects throughout Montana.



BEFORE: March 26, 1952, looking east at US 2 and First Street in Havre.



AFTER: August 12, 2008, looking east at US 2 and First Street in Havre—MDT's largest ever urban reconstruction project.

Increased Law Enforcement Saves Lives

The Montana Highway Patrol (MHP) has created a six-person roving unit to patrol Montana's high-enforcement corridors. This roving unit, which includes one sergeant and five troopers, is funded by a grant from MDT. The purpose of this unit is to create an increased law enforcement presence on roadways with the highest crash rates.

MDT also funds the Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) which enables local law enforcement agencies to increase patrols on high-enforcement corridors within their jurisdictions. The combined efforts of MDT, MHP and local law enforcement contributed to a decrease in crashes from 1,061 in 2006 to 997 in 2007. Fatalities and serious injuries along these

corridors decreased from 156 in 2006 to 107 in 2007. There were 23 fatalities on the high-enforcement corridors in 2006, compared to 12 in 2007. This data shows that Montana is meeting and exceeding its long-term goal to reduce fatalities and injuries on Montana's roadways.

Roving patrols are not only about enforcement, they are about education. "Part of what we're doing is educating people," said one trooper. "Too many people have no idea about [the laws], but it's really for the safety of both the officer and the motorist who's been stopped."

The efforts demonstrate that increasing enforcement on high-enforcement corridors at the right times and in the right areas can save lives.



Motorcycle Safety Classes Key to Reducing Crashes



A student is coached on a proper turning technique.

Motorcycle sales and use have dramatically increased nationally due in large part to the rise in gas prices. The Motorcycle Industry Council, a trade association, reports that Americans purchased 1.1 million cycles last year, 30 percent more than the 850,000 purchased in 2001.

Montana is a one-time motorcycle registration state, which means that owners have to register their motorcycles only once as long as they own them.

Over the past two years, Montana saw motorcycle registrations increase by 13 percent.

Motorcycle crashes in Montana also increased with 42 percent involving a fatality or serious injury. Last year, 33 crashes resulted in 36 fatalities with 23 of these involving “baby boomers” or older riders. Slowed reaction times caused by age, bike size, and lack of recent riding experience can be key factors causing fatalities.

The leading causes of fatalities in motorcycle crashes are:

- Lack of training.
- Lack of the “safety cage” that a car provides.
- Rider misjudgment when entering curves of the roadway.
- Motorcycle size, rider experience, and/or age of the rider.

New rider courses teach rules of the road and familiarize riders with basic motorcycle skills. Motorcyclists who have ridden before, but have not done so in years, also benefit from these classes. Instructors are experienced riders with at least 80 hours of instruction and experience. Classes are taught using motorcycles with 200cc to 250cc engines and take into account each student’s bike size and riding experience. Some riders graduate slowly to larger bikes. The Motorcycle Safety Foundation reports a 10 percent increase in participation in this program.

Rider safety training is funded partially by motorcycle vehicle registration, motorcycle endorsements, and class fees. Montana Motorcycle Rider Safety (MMRS) is a public service offered through Montana State University-Northern. The MMRS course uses the Motorcycle Safety Foundation’s rider course curriculum, which has proven effective in improving rider skills nationally. The basic course teaches rules of the road and bike familiarization. The experienced course is designed for riders who have more than one year of experience or have ridden more than 3,000 miles and teaches more advanced skills using the student’s own motorcycle. Successful completion of the course exempts the student from taking the skill portion of the motorcycle endorsement tests offered by the Montana Motor Vehicle Division.

MDT is funding several motorcycle safety projects including an interactive website at <http://ridemt.com/>. This website provides information about key motorcycle riding safety tips, the top ten rides in Montana, and allows users to vote on the best ride.

Next spring, MDT will begin a public information and education campaign to make motorists more aware of motorcyclists on Montana’s roadways. The campaign will also increase media coverage of the dangers of impaired riding. MDT will supply new helmets for class use in the MMRS riding courses.



A motorcycle safety instructor coaches students during an exercise.

Important Motorcycle Safety Tips:

- Do a pre-ride check – check tire pressure.
- Slow down appropriately on corners – look for obstacles.
- Be aware at intersections – don’t assume people see you.
- Share the road – ride defensively.
- Use appropriate lanes at all times.
- Group riding – accommodate different riding skills.
- Keep group size manageable.
- Be visible – wear more visible colors.
- Wear safety gear – including a helmet.
- Be legal – get your license endorsed.
- Ride sober.
- Ride a bike appropriate for your size and abilities.
- **Take a class to develop or refresh your riding skills.**

For more information on rider courses and motorcycle safety, contact:

- Montana Motorcycle Rider Safety at 1-800-922-BIKE, or visit its website at <http://motorcycle.msun.edu>
- Angie Mullikin in MDT’s Highway Traffic Safety Bureau at amullikin@mt.gov or 444-7301

Helena Traffic Signal Project Turns Corner



Improvements at Montana and 11th Avenue in Helena.

Work crews have passed the halfway mark for a project to upgrade 28 Helena intersections.

The MDT project will reduce energy use, improve air quality, improve pedestrian safety, and delay the need for expensive capacity expansion projects. Scott Construction of East Helena is the contractor for the \$2.7 million project.

In addition to new Light Emitting Diode (LED) lights, which use 85 percent less energy and are brighter and longer-lasting than traditional

incandescent lights, the improvements include computer and radio communication technology that will allow MDT to synchronize the signals. The project also includes new LED pedestrian crossing lights and new or upgraded wheelchair ramps.

Improvements to six of the busiest intersections, including several near Capital Hill Mall, will include Accessible Pedestrian Signal (APS) technology that uses audio and tactile aids to help disabled pedestrians safely cross the busy intersections.

Most of Helena's existing traffic signals were installed as part of individual projects that were built over many decades. According to MDT Director Jim Lynch, many of the signals are outdated and inefficient and can't be linked together. The project is scheduled to wrap up in November. MDT apologizes for the traffic disruptions the project caused, but once completed, the project will improve traffic and pedestrian flows.

MDT has completed similar citywide signal upgrade projects in Bozeman, Butte, Missoula, Great Falls, and Kalispell.

While work continues, MDT reminds motorists to travel at posted speeds and obey all posted signs. Fines double in work zones. For the latest construction information go to

www.mdt511.com.

CTEP Spotlight

Welcome to St. Regis!

Travelers exiting Interstate 90 at St. Regis are now greeted by a newly landscaped entryway. The St. Regis community, including members of the St. Regis Resort Board, worked with Mineral County to landscape and beautify a former weed-infested area and turn it into a welcoming entrance to St. Regis.

The new entryway features flower beds, trees, shrubs, rock garden walls, boulders, a rock riverbed, and displays that include a welcome sign and sculpted rainbow trout. Montana State University and the Mineral County Extension Office helped design the landscaping. Valley Landscaping, Inc., of Missoula was the contractor.

This project is the newest of several recent CTEP-funded landscaping and beautification projects in communities across Montana, including Broadus, Lima, Wolf Point, Butte, Stanford, Great Falls, and Deer Lodge. The "landscaping and scenic beautification" project category is one of the most popular CTEP categories with more than 130 projects completed in the past 15 years. Community involvement from start to finish (and beyond) is the key to these projects. Local communities provide 13.42 percent of the funding and provide the ongoing care and maintenance necessary to keep the landscape and welcoming features vital and attractive for years to come.



Newly landscaped entryway greets travelers at St. Regis.

CTEP is the Community Transportation Enhancement Program.
For more information, contact Mike Wherley at 444-4221 or mwherley@mt.gov.

Room to Live

Vehicles are built with a reinforced safety cage to protect the occupants in a crash. Within that cage is your best chance to survive—because there is "room to live" **IF** you stay in the vehicle properly buckled up.

To view a true Montana story that highlights this fact, go online to www.mdt.mt.gov and click on the **Room to Live** DVD.

The DVD is also available free of charge by contacting MDT at 444-6201 or cricchem@mt.gov.



Room to Live
Think seatbelts are a personal choice?

Dan LaHood *continued from page 7*

The paintings under the canopy remained intact and were quite a curiosity for those who pulled over to view them. Unfortunately, the fire that burned the hotel destroyed the signs, taking with it a unique legacy of one man's optimism in Montana and the golden age of automobile tourism in the Treasure State. And, yes, the Montana Highway Department's efforts to upgrade and modernize the state's highways succeeded. By 1940, what had once been among the country's worst highways had become a system that was much admired not only by other state highway departments, but especially by the thousands of motorists who relied on them.

Montana Context-Sensitive Solutions Receive National Recognition

MDT uses a variety of traditional and innovative approaches in meeting the challenges of maintaining and improving Montana's large highway system with limited funding. One of the innovative approaches involves the use of Context-Sensitive Solutions principles in developing highway improvement projects.

Context-Sensitive Solutions, or CSS, is a relatively new highway project development concept that emphasizes the importance of designing projects that address multimodal transportation needs while respecting the often unique surrounding natural and manmade context of the projects. The Institute of Transportation Engineers describes CSS as:

... a process of balancing the competing needs of many stakeholders starting in the earliest stages of project development. It is also flexibility in the application of design controls, guidelines, and standards to design a facility that is safe for all users regardless of the mode of travel they choose.

Nationally, state departments of transportation and other highway agencies have taken different approaches to incorporating CSS principles into their project development processes. In Montana, MDT's approach to CSS has produced transportation improvements that support the often very different goals and characteristics of Montana communities. Several of these improvements have received national recognition:

- MDT's reconstruction of Woodward Avenue (Montana Highway 78) through Absarokee addressed many long-standing issues in the small unincorporated community south of Columbus. These issues included poor drainage and limited pedestrian facilities. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, which awarded a Best Practices in Context-Sensitive Solutions award to the Woodward Avenue Project, described the effort as an "absolutely remarkable example of a transportation agency going the extra mile to address the needs of a small community . . ."
- MDT also shared a recent national Transportation Planning Excellence Award from the American Planning Association, Federal Transit Administration, and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for the design of the US 93 projects between Evaro and Polson. This biennial award recognized the cooperative effort by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, FHWA, and MDT to design highway improvements in a primarily rural corridor with special cultural and scenic characteristics. FHWA previously hailed the US 93 effort as a "hallmark of Context-Sensitive Design."

For more information on the Absarokee project and other examples of CSS visit http://environment.transportation.org/pdf/p06_v9B.pdf.



BEFORE: Woodward Avenue (Montana Highway 78) through Absarokee.



AFTER: MDT's national award winning reconstruction of Woodward Avenue (Montana Highway 78) through Absarokee.



Wildlife Crossing Context-Sensitive Design on US 93.

Transit Tales

International Walk-to-School Day



Wednesday, October 8, is International Walk-to-School Day. In 2007, thousands of children from 34 schools across Montana participated in the event designed to create walkable communities and lessen the effects of a sedentary life-

style for children. This year, MDT Director Jim Lynch will be participating in the Walk-to-School event in Gallatin Gateway.

Walk-to-School Day teaches children safe walking behaviors such as how to cross streets and select safe routes to school. In addition, the event promotes physical fitness and gives parents an opportunity to spend more time with their children.

This year, the Safe Routes to School program partnered with the Children's Health Insurance Program to distribute information to students and their families. Over 20,000 informational postcards were distributed to interested schools across Montana. These schools will participate in a variety of Walk-to-School Day activities, including bike trains and walking school buses where a group of students accompanied by an adult walk or bicycle on a preplanned route to school.

Participants will receive prizes, incentives, and healthy breakfasts or treats. Schools can register at www.walktoschool.org. Phone 1-877-935-SAFE (7233) for additional information and postcards.

Additional Vehicles Slated for Community Public Transit Systems

The number of public transit systems outside of Montana's three urbanized areas, (Billings, Missoula, and Great Falls) has increased from nine to 33 since 2005, thanks to an increase in federal funding and the efforts of local agencies and MDT staff. The unprecedented effort encouraged coordination and consolidation of existing resources, including buses and vans, to avoid duplication of services and maximize the cost-effectiveness of the new and expanded services. Due to increases in transit demand and the need to replace aging vehicles, MDT is in the process of ordering 35 additional buses and vans for use by Montana's non-urbanized public transit systems.

"Coordinated public transit services are a key to the quality of life of our residents and the health of our communities," said Jim Lynch, MDT Director. "Well-planned capital investments are important in keeping these services viable, especially with increasing fuel costs and an aging population."

MDT administers the Federal Transit Administration programs that provide 86 percent of the funding for buses, bus and pedestrian shelters, and other capital needs, with local communities providing the balance.

"For those who don't drive or have access to a vehicle, transportation is a daily challenge for things such as getting to the post office, to medical services, or to the grocery store," said

Lynch. "New buses and vans, in addition to the operating funds that MDT provides, will help Montana's community transit systems address these challenges." The first vehicles will be delivered later this fall with the remaining vehicles scheduled for delivery in early 2009.

Contact Audrey Allums at 444-4210 or aallums@mt.gov for more information.



New buses and vans will soon be on their way to communities throughout Montana.

New Transit Grants = New Services

Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom are two new federal transit grant programs that have benefited Montana residents.

JARC funds support services to transport welfare and low-income individuals to and from jobs. One of the first JARC grants in Montana went to Mountain Line in Missoula. Mountain Line recently received additional funds to add three more routes and increase service along routes where many buses are operating with standing room only.

New Freedom funds support services that encourage improvements to address the transportation needs of persons with disabilities. Programs must be new as of August 10, 2005, and go beyond services required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Helena Area Transit System (HATS) is working with the Rocky Mountain Development Council (RMDC) to provide New Freedom funds to increase the reimbursement rate for 139 senior companions. The program focuses on special medical transportation needs of the most vulnerable elderly individuals in the Helena area. The service offers transportation to medical appointments, shopping, and day-to-day activities. RMDC provided 45,749 rides this year. "Last year, our volunteers logged just under 155,000 miles," Pam Novak of RMDC said. "Only by offering mileage reimbursement for gas costs are we able to maintain volunteers and keep the program moving."

For more information about these programs, contact Tom Stuber at 444-9216 or tstuber@mt.gov.

Coming Soon . . .

- **Helena-Great Falls Bike/Ped Path Feasibility Study**—The study will evaluate the suitability of public right-of-ways adjoining county and state roads for development of a bicycle/pedestrian path between Helena and Great Falls.
- **Rail Plan Update**—MDT's Rail Plan Update will include a description of Montana's rail system, policy issues, and a feasibility analysis of expanded passenger rail service in southern Montana.

Contact Zia Kazimi at zkazimi@mt.gov for more information.

Traffic Noise – A Growing Problem

MDT recently published *Growing Neighborhoods in Growing Corridors: Land-Use Planning for Highway Noise* as a tool kit for local governments and others interested in considering highway noise as a factor in land-use planning.

Montana's traffic noise problem is growing – largely because development is overtaking the open and formerly agricultural lands next to some of Montana's highways – but also because traffic volumes are increasing in many developed areas. Residential dwellings and other noise-sensitive land uses are in direct conflict with these high-speed, high-volume roadways and require new alternatives and approaches by local jurisdictions responsible for land-use decisions. Although MDT considers noise levels and impacts in its highway expansion projects, noise problems that arise from development and land-use changes near highways are a local responsibility.

The tool kit covers:

- Understanding and measuring traffic noise.
- Recommended maximum noise levels.
- Land-use planning alternatives and approaches to noise planning.
- Manmade and natural noise barriers.
- Model policy and program language.
- On-line resources.

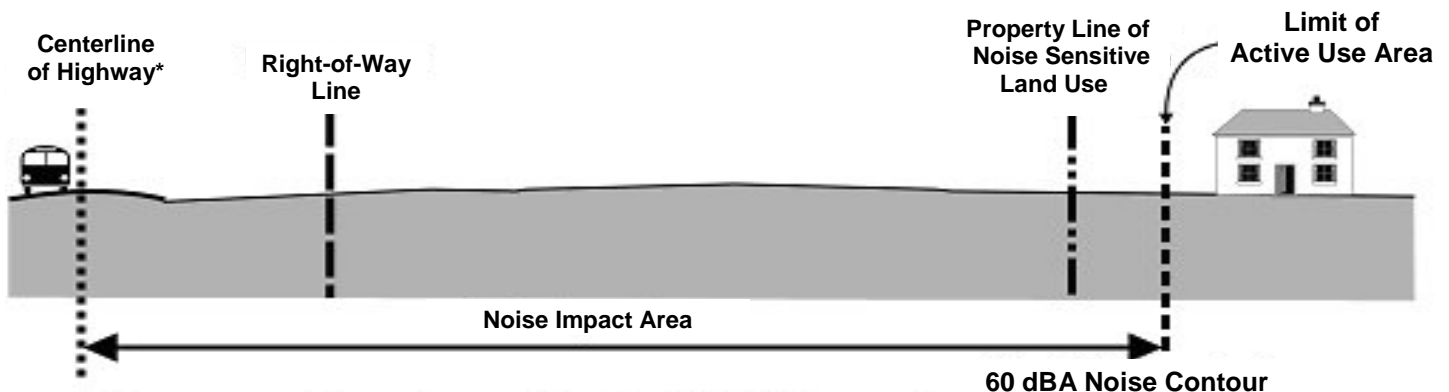
The document also provides recommended noise levels for different land-use activities and strategies for including those noise levels in planning regulations.

Some Montana communities have already recognized the importance of considering noise in land-use requirements. Kalispell, for example, implemented noise planning requirements for new developments along the Kalispell Bypass that require developers to keep noise levels below 60 decibels at property lines adjacent to the Bypass. Developers may need to incorporate noise abatement into their developments.

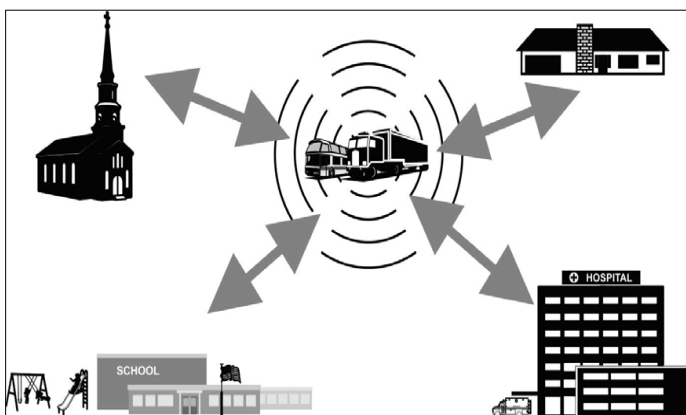
Growing Neighborhoods in Growing Corridors can help Montana's local governments and developers tackle highway traffic noise before it becomes a significant issue. Effective land-use planning strategies are available and can be far less costly than after-the-fact mitigation. Access the full report at: http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/docs/research_proj/noise_plan/final_report.pdf.

Contact Cora Helm at 444-7659 or cohelm@mt.gov for more information.

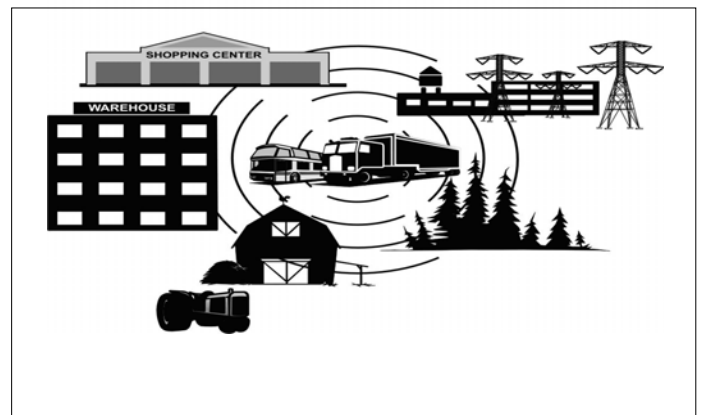
Example of Highway Noise Impact Area



*Measurement is from the centerline of a divided highway or boulevard.



Noise-sensitive land uses



Noise-compatible land uses

Dan LaHood & the Jefferson River Canyon Road

by Jon Axline, MDT Historian

For many years, motorists on US Highway 10 east of Cardwell stopped to gas up at the LaHood Hotel. Not only could they buy gasoline there, but also grab a bite to eat and, if tired, get a room in the hotel, which was situated at the head of the scenic Jefferson River Canyon. The canopy next to the hotel that sheltered the gas pumps, however, proved to be the real treasure at the site. Even after the hotel closed, it provided a rare glimpse into Montana's tourism industry during the 1930s. The hotel and canopy were the products of one of southwestern Montana's most aggressive tourism promoters during the Great Depression, Shadan "Dan" LaHood.

The development of Montana's highways in the early 20th century created new opportunities for small-time entrepreneurs like Dan LaHood. Born in Lebanon in 1878, he immigrated to the United States in 1899. After arriving here in 1902, he solicited sales orders for businesses in southwestern Montana until 1909, when he and his wife, Fannie, opened a grocery store at Jefferson Island, a small community on the busy Yellowstone Trail (now Secondary 359) a few miles north of Cardwell. The state's highway system was still evolving and changes to it would force the LaHoods to adapt or lose their livelihood.

In 1930, author Hoffman Birney wrote "The roads of Montana are, I believe, the poorest of any state in the Union. Even the glorious scenery of the Rockies can't entirely make up for ruts, chug-holes, mud and detours – to say nothing of broken springs or stone-bruised tires." Unfortunately, Birney was not alone in his opinion, which had been a grave concern to the Montana State Highway Commission through most of the 1920s. Because of that bad reputation, the highway department made a concentrated effort, beginning in 1928, to improve the Treasure State's highways. Eventually, the program would include not only road and bridge improvements, but a comprehensive tourism program to draw visitors to the state. One of the main goals of the highway department during the late 1920s and 1930s was to provide more direct alignments between communities that would also take better advantage of the state's historic and natural attractions.

In February 1927, the highway department's engineers and highway commissioners began making plans to reroute US 10 through the Jefferson River Canyon and abandon the old Yellowstone Trail between Cardwell and Willow Creek. The new route, while more expensive, provided a more direct connection between Whitehall and Three Forks and took advantage of the proximity to Lewis & Clark Caverns by providing tourists better access to it. The plan was not without controversy, as the proposed alignment polarized communities in Gallatin, Madison, and Jefferson counties who were worried about the economic impact of the project.

The debate between the routes persisted through 1927 and into 1928 with the highway commissioners receiving petitions and hearing delegations from those in favor of and opposed to the Jefferson Canyon route. In February 1928, the commission approved Federal Aid Project 248 through the canyon between Cardwell and Sappington and, five months later, awarded a contract to the Tim Lawler Company of Butte to build the 17-mile road for just under \$121,000.

Even before the highway commission made its decision, Dan LaHood purchased 164 acres at the head of the canyon. In the spring of 1928, he began construction of the imposing 2½ story Mountain View Inn on his property. A carpenter by trade, LaHood built the buildings himself and completed them in time to host a banquet for the Yellowstone Trail Association in 1929.

By 1933, he had completed construction of several tourist cabins across the new highway from the hotel and christened the new "town" on Highway 10 "LaHood Park."

Around 1936, LaHood commissioned Butte sign painter Frank Bliss to paint panels for installation on the underside of a new gas pump island canopy in front of the hotel. In addition to providing a detailed strip map of US 10, the panels depicted scenes from nearby Lewis & Clark Caverns and advertisements for Butte, Rocky Mountain and

Highlander beers, Boulder Hot Springs, Cook's Cabin Camp in Butte, and Gregson Hot Springs, among other businesses. Most telling of LaHood's political leanings was a panel that read "President F.D. Roosevelt for the New Deal, Shadan LaHood for the New Idea and Montana Booster." Indeed, in 1934, Dan provided several acres adjacent to the hotel to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) for use as a campsite while they worked on improving the caverns between 1935 and 1939.

LaHood Park continued to do a thriving business on the highway well into the 1950s. In 1950, LaHood constructed a separate restaurant adjacent to the hotel. Also, the tourist cabins across the highway were converted into a more modern facility and renamed the Lewis & Clark Lodge Motel. Ironically, LaHood's operation was once again bypassed in 1966 with the construction of Interstate 90 approximately three miles to the north. Dan LaHood, the "Syrian Volcano," died in Butte in 1957. He was eulogized as "Little in stature but in an age when big railroad jobs, big mining ventures and big men were the order of the day, Dan LaHood stood his ground."

The hotel closed shortly after Dan's death and opened only occasionally as new owners attempted to revitalize the roadside business. For the most part, those endeavors failed, but the café remained a popular stopping place for motorists. The hotel remained little changed from its appearance in 1937 until a disastrous fire in 2001 destroyed the building. The motel across the road still exists and the colorful 1950s-vintage neon sign remains, though it hasn't been lighted in well over 30 years.

... Continued on page 3



LaHood Hotel on US Highway 10 east of Cardwell

MDT Wants Your Comments

To receive a list of highway projects MDT plans to present to the Transportation Commission, visit http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/docs/trans_comm/proposed_proj.pdf, or give us a call at 800-714-7296. You can mail your comments on proposed projects to MDT at the following address or e-mail them to mdtnewprojects@mt.gov.

MDT Project Analysis Chief
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Contact Information

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call 800-714-7296 (in Montana only) or 406-444-3423. The TTY number is 406-444-7696 or 800-335-7592.

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MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in any service, program, or activity of the Department. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request. For further information call 406-444-3423, TTY 800-335-7592, or the Montana Relay at 711.

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MDT's mission is to serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality and sensitivity to the environment.

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